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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

COMMERCE FOR 4520/ITA/MAC/ONE/COBERG
ATHENS FOR CASLO MONTGOMERY

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SUBJECT: TF1Z01: RJ FLYING, BUT MOST INTERNATIONAL CARRIERS
SUSPEND FLIGHTS

1. (SBU) Queen Alia International Airport Director Nasri Nowar told us that while the airport remains open, most international carriers have suspended or are about to suspend service. These include KLM, Air France, Lufthansa, Alitalia, and British Airways. He said that national carrier Royal Jordanian Airlines (RJ) and regional carriers Gulf Air, Emirates, and others continue to operate. The airport is on what Nowar called "high security alert status." In the event of hostilities, Nowar said he expected to keep the airport open. He said that he has worked with a number of humanitarian agencies to coordinate arrangements for use of the airport for humanitarian purposes.

2. (SBU) RJ officials told us the airline had canceled its Thursday and Friday UN-approved charter flights to Baghdad. Otherwise, the airline hopes to continue to operate normally for as long as possible and as long as insurance is available. This includes RJ's direct service to JFK, Chicago, and Detroit. If operations out of Amman become impossible, RJ will transfer its hub to Athens, with regular shuttle flights to Amman. Nowar added that a number of Iraqis, denied entry into Jordan in accordance with current GOJ policy, were expected to be returned to Baghdad via an unscheduled RJ flight today, Wednesday, March 19.
GNEHM